

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 AID-05 IO-13 MCT-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EB-08

PC-01 /102 W

-----047736 270339Z /70

R 262049Z JUN 78

FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6710

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 2084

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, SHUM, UY

SUBJECT: MILITARY RESPONDS TO CATHOLIC BISHOPS' ATTEMPT AT
A DIALOGUE

REF: 77 MONTEVIDEO 5807

1. THE EMBASSY HAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED (REFTEL) AN ATTEMPT BY URUGUAY'S CATHOLIC BISHOPS TO ENTER INTO A DIALOGUE WITH THE GOU ON THE LATTER'S VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES, AND THE ECONOMICALLY DISTRESSED CONDITION OF THE COUNTRY'S POORER CLASSES. THE BISHOPS' MEMORANDUM WAS PASSED TO THE GOU LATE LAST YEAR, AND WE UNDERSTAND IT WAS DISCUSSED AT THE GOU'S QUOTE CONCLAVE UNQUOTE OF SENIOR CIVIL AND MILITARY OFFICIALS IN DECEMBER. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF OPENLY ADMITTED FAILURE BY THE MILITARY TO AGREE ON A RESPONSE, THE GOU HELD OFF REPLYING UNTIL LATE APRIL, WHEN A DELEGATION OF FIVE GENERAL AND FLAG OFFICERS MET WITH ARCHBISHOP PARTELLI AND HIS FOUR EPISCOPAL COLLEAGUES. A SUMMARY TRANSCRIPT OF THEIR TWO AND A HALF HOUR DISCUSSION HAS RECENTELY BEEN PASSED TO THE EMBASSY.

2. THE GOU WAS REPRESENTED BY GENERALS RAIMUNDEZ,
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RAPELA, PRANTL, BOARAD (AIR FORCE), AND RADM SANGURGO. ARCHBISHOP PARTELLI WAS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS AUXILIARY BISHOP GOTTARDI AND BISHOPS TONNA, CORSO AND SEIJAS OF DIOCESES FROM THE INTERIOR. DIALOGUE BEGAN WITH THE CLERGY RE-INTRODUCING A PRINCIPAL THEME OF THEIR EARLIER MEMORANDUM, THE FATE OF INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES WHO HAVE BEEN FIRED FROM TEACHING AND OTHER GOVERNMENT JOBS FOR IDEO-

LOGICAL REASONS. THE DIALOGUE SHIFTED TO MONOLOGUE AT THAT POINT, WITH MILITARY REPRESENTATIVES LAUNCHING INTO THE LENGTHY DEFENSE OF GOU ANTI-SUBVERSIVE MEASURES WHICH, IN THE EMBASSY'S EXPERIENCE, HAS TO BE ENDURED AS THE PRICE OF ANY SERIOUS CONTACT WITH MOST GOU SPOKESMEN. AFTER THAT, CONVERSATION STAYED GENERALLY CLOSE TO THE ORIGINAL THEME (WHEN IT WAS NOT LOST IN IRRELEVANCIES), WITH THE GENERALS DOING MOST OF THE TALKING. THEY ASKED OPENLY FOR GREATER ASSISTANCE FROM THE CHURCH IN PREVENTING A RETURN TO QUOTE THE EXCESSES OF THE PAST UNQUOTE. THIS WAS DEFTLY TURNED ASIDE BY THE BISHOPS' DENUNCIATION OF CERTAIN EXCESSES COMMITTED BY A GOU OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH CHECKING TEACHERS' BACKGROUNDS. TOWARD THE END, CONVERSATION TURNED TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY AND ECONOMIC THEMES WHICH HAD BEEN RAISED BY THE BISHOPS. THE MILITARY FLATLY REJECTED THEIR ARGUMENTS AND WENT ON TO JUSTIFY AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH THE GOU'S AUSTERITY ECONOMICS: MAKE THE CAKE BEFORE SERVING IT OUT.

3. THE MEETING CLOSED WITH THE GENERALS AGREEING TO LOOK INTO THE SPECIFIC ABUSES SINGLED OUT BY THE BISHOPS, AND SETTING UP A CHANNEL FOR FUTURE COMMUNICATION: BISHOP GOTTARDI AND DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE CHIEF GEN. PRANTL.

4. COMMENT - THE MILITARY WERE A BLEND OF ULTRAS (SANGURGO, PRANTL) AND MODERATES (BORAD, RAIMUNDEZ), WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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RAPELO SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN. IN SPITE OF THE LIBERAL TONE OF ITS ARGUMENT, THE CHURCH DELEGATION ALSO INCLUDED ITS OWN REACTIONARIES, OF WHOM MONS. CORSO IS A LEADING EXAMPLE. PERHAPS THE CHIEF IMPORTANCE OF THE MEETING WAS THAT IT TOOK PLACE AT ALL, AND THAT A PERMANENT CHANNEL OF CONTACT (IF NOT COMMUNICATION) WAS ESTABLISHED. OTHERWISE, THE MEETING WAS A DISAPPOINTMENT, A QUOTE DIALOGUE UNQUOTE BETWEEN THE WEAK AND THE IGNORANT. THE BISHOPS SEEMED DISAPPOINTINGLY UNPREPARED, ARGUED FEEBLY, CHOSE THEIR GROUND POORLY AND USED EXTREMELY CAUTIOUS TACTICS. THE MILITARY, FOR THEIR PART, STAYED TIED INTO THE SIMPLISTIC LOCKSTEP THINKING THAT HAS LED THE GOU TO ITS PRESENT PREDICAMENT. IN GENERAL, BOTH SIDES RAN UNFORTUNATELY TRUE TO FORM.
CHEEK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CATHOLICS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MONTEV02084
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780265-0777
Format: TEL
From: MONTEVIDEO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780620/aaaaarmd.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5819ee7f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 MONTEVIDEO 5807
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2210700
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MILITARY RESPONDS TO CATHOLIC BISHOPS' ATTEMPT AT A DIALOGUE
TAGS: PINS, SHUM, UY
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5819ee7f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014